

The Treasury of the Faith Series: G

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GOD THE CREATOR



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GOD THE CREATOR

By

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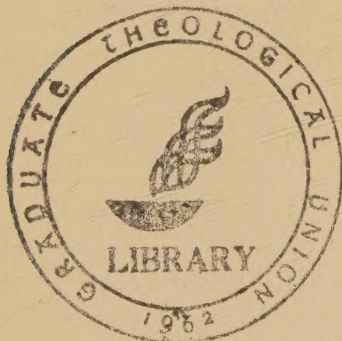
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INTRODUCTION

RELIGIOUS knowledge is the greatest need of our day; lack of religious knowledge is the supreme evil. Without religious knowledge illuminating the intellect and determining the will, it is impossible in the ordinary economy for man to know or to reach his eternal destiny.

There is a somewhat general conviction that infidelity, either tame or violent, is making rapid and fatal strides in many quarters outside the Catholic Church. And, among Catholics, the admission is universal that, if doctrinal knowledge is to hold its own against easy ignorance, there must be constant and intelligent effort in every line of religious instruction. Judging by the titles, those who planned and executed *The Treasury of the Faith Series* have realised this fact. Their work covers the whole field of dogmatic teaching and makes a valuable addition to English theological literature.

God The Creator, to which these words are a preface, is the sixth volume of these little manuals, which number thirty-five in all. In a style simple, clear, precise and at-

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tractive the book sets forth the doctrine of the Church on the fundamental problem of Creation. And the problem of Creation is fundamental in the sense that had there been no Creation there would have been no problems.

The development of the various theses is reasonably detailed without being prolix; it meets the needs of the learned layman; it is not beyond the understanding of the beginner; nor may it be wisely set aside even by him who is deeply versed in theology. For every reader it will repay careful study and patient meditation.

Chapter VI, "The Story of Creation," is particularly apposite and satisfying, and, from the practical point of view, is perhaps the most important and most interesting portion of the book. The question of the harmony between defined doctrine on Creation and the positive results of scientific knowledge is set forth in a brief and illuminating statement of principles. There is no theorising and little space given to theories.

Chapter VII, "The Creation of Man," likewise meets in a simple and straightforward fashion the baseless theories as well as the established facts of modern science, while setting forth very clearly what is and what is not the teaching of the Church.

INTRODUCTION

The authors of the various volumes, many of whom are well and widely known in America, are a guarantee of literary excellence and accurate knowledge. *The Treasury of the Faith Series* will be of immense service to priests and seminarians, and should also be found in the hands of all laymen who desire to be able to give a reason for the faith that is in them and to become apostles of the truth in the world in which they live.

✠ MICHAEL FRANCIS FALLON,
Bishop of London.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

How man himself, the world in which he lives, and the greater world of the heavens came into being, are questions that men have asked themselves from at least the earliest times of recorded human thought. And vast numbers of men have failed and still fail to find a satisfactory answer. The human reason, indeed, is capable, by its own natural powers, of finding the right solution to the riddle; but, in fact, the difficulties are so great, the obstacles put by men themselves in the way of straight thinking are so many, the influences leading their minds astray are so powerful, that it is very rare for civilised man, left to his own devices, to discover the true answer, and rarer still for him consistently to hold to it. Men in the more primitive state, with their simpler and more direct and natural outlook, and without the distractions and impediments arising from a

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complex civilisation, seem, on the whole, to have a truer view of the question, and to be less troubled by the doubts, uncertainties, and speculative fancies that afflict the mind of civilised man. In the course of our exposition we shall have occasion briefly to speak of some of the theories to which men have had recourse; at present it is enough to note the simple fact that many different opinions have been and are held.

It is easy to see and needs no proof that this question of the origin of the world and, more particularly, of man himself is of the highest importance, is, indeed, one of the few fundamental questions as to which the holding of right or of wrong views means having a true or a false outlook upon the whole of life. A right view is the necessary foundation of a true philosophy of life, of a true individual and social ethic, of a true religion; whereas by a false view philosophy, ethic, and religion are of necessity falsified, confused, and misdirected. The question, then, being so weighty, and its inherent and incidental difficulties so many and so grave, it has pleased God, in his mercy, not to leave men without divine help and direction in the matter. He has come to man's aid; by clear and repeated revelation he has made it easy for him to discover the certain truth, and by his grace he enables

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him, without much difficulty, to hold to it firmly and consistently. This truth is summed up in the opening words of the Apostles' Creed: "I believe in God the Father, Creator of heaven and earth." The revelation of this truth is, however, far older than Christianity. The Jews from the earliest times held the same belief. It is taught constantly and explicitly throughout the Old Testament. This doctrine is, therefore, one of those which, as regards their main lines, have undergone no development since the first days of the church's existence. At the same time, however, all its implications have not been fully and clearly perceived from the beginning, nor have all its particular applications been always rightly understood. In these respects there have been development and growth of clarity which it will be our business to note as we proceed. But first of all certain fundamental things must be made clear, and certain points elucidated as being necessary to a proper understanding of the whole dogma.

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CHAPTER II

THE IDEA AND MEANING OF CREATION

THE verb "to create" does not necessarily mean to make something from nothing; this is true, also, of the equivalents of the English word in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. But the word in all these languages does contain the idea of a productive action that, in one way or another, is more than ordinarily powerful. Thus we speak rightly of the creations of a genius in music and sculpture, or we talk of the Sovereign creating new peers of the realm. Consequently the word is properly applied in a special and distinctive way to that action, requiring the exercise of infinite power, by which God—to use the ordinary but not wholly satisfactory phrase—makes something out of nothing, or—to speak more precisely—makes something to be where there was absolutely nothing. This is the strict theological meaning of the word; this is the sense in which we shall use it throughout this volume, unless we make it clear that it is to be taken less strictly.

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We see at once that this act differs wholly from any of which we have experience. Nothing at all like it is known to us. All the productive actions within the range of our experience need a subject to work upon, and merely effect some change in a thing already existing. The sculptor who produces a statue does not make a new thing, he but changes the form or shape of an old thing, the stone or marble upon which he works; the musician playing on his instrument produces vibrations in the existing air; the chemist makes new substances by combining or dividing existing ones; even thoughts or ideas, which may at first seem to be really new creations, are not so. In the first place, they have no independent existence apart from the thinker, being nothing but passing modifications of his mind; and secondly, in order to produce them he must have pre-existing material, objects of thought, to work upon. Without these human thought is impossible. All these productive actions, and all others possible to men, are therefore reducible to some sort of change effected in some subject that was already in existence before the action began. But creation is not like any of these. Creation is not a transformation of one thing into another, nor is it an emanation or outflow of something from the creator's own

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being, nor any kind of action about or upon some pre-existing subject or material. Creation means just this: that besides God, and apart from God, there was nothing, no being of any sort whatsoever; God willed, commanded, and behold, at his command and by the sole power of his will, things, substances, beings, sprang into existence. Where nothing had been, now there is something; something that is neither God, nor a part of God, nor an emanation from his substance; something having its own being and its own special nature, and yet dependent upon God for all it has and all it is.

How this creative action proceeds we know not; its mode is beyond our understanding. We can have no experience of it. It is beyond the ken of physical science, which, dealing only with the phenomena of human experience, and with the flow and succession under the impact of finite forces, cannot reach to the very first beginning of things when infinite power acted. Yet in the idea itself there is nothing contradictory, nothing offensive to human reason. On the contrary, not only has God clearly revealed that such was the origin of all things, but human reason itself can prove and does prove that so it must have been, while no theory can satisfy, as does this

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truth, all the imperious exigencies of human thought.

I said just now that the common description of creation as "the making of something out of nothing" is not wholly satisfactory. This is so because, in common speech, the words "out of" in the expression "to make out of" refer to the subject or the material from which someone, by working upon it, produces something else, as when we say that a carpenter makes a table out of wood. But it is clearly impossible even for God to work upon nothing, or to use nothing as the material or stuff from which to produce something. The idea is self-contradictory. This may seem a small, even a trivial matter, but the point must be made and even pressed, because at least from the third century, right down to our own times, opponents of creation have used this definition as a peg on which to hang the charge that the concept of creation is self-contradictory, since, as they have triumphantly pointed out, it is quite impossible for anything to come out of nothing. Creation, then, would be more accurately defined as the production of something in its totality, or, again, as the action that, without working upon any already existing subject or material, produces something wholly new.

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It will help to complete and to make clearer our notion of this fundamental concept if we glance at two or three more of those aspects of creation which put it into a class by itself. In the first place we need hardly say that no created being can itself create. Creatures are of necessity limited in nature and capacity, whereas to create needs the exercise of unlimited, that is, of infinite power. A creature can act only if he has some other created being to act upon; put him, even the highest and noblest of creatures, up against sheer nothingness, and, having nothing to take hold of, his utmost power is powerless. Creation is so far removed beyond the possibility of created power that we might almost say that God himself, in order to create, must bring into action the full force of his infinite might.

Secondly, we may remark that creation cannot be a gradual process; there can be no measurement in time, no succession of movements or status in the creation of anything. Between simple not-being and being there can be no middle state of half-being, for this would already be something. Nothingness cannot grow and gradually change into something. And consequently, since it is growth, change, succession, movement that require time and there is none of these in the creative

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process, creation is, in the strictest sense, instantaneous, or even more exactly, timeless.

From this it follows directly that the fact of creation is one of those truths that are altogether beyond the reach of investigation, of proof or disproof by physical science. This can deal only with the measurement of time processes, with the succession of phenomena in time, with the relation of state to state of things subject to movement and so to time, with the mutual activities of things acting in time; to go beyond this into the region of timeless production, of production without movement, growth or succession, belongs primarily to the philosopher and metaphysician, while the theologian, using the data of revelation, may be said to act as a court of higher appeal.

We make no attempt to disguise the fact that the notion of creation is hard to understand; rather, we fully acknowledge that in its inward reality, as in its mode of realisation, it is beyond our power adequately to grasp; it is truly a mystery. It is as much beyond our power to understand the idea, as it would be to perform the act of creation. But no apology is needed on that score, no valid objection can be based on the difficulty involved. Ease of comprehension is not necessarily a signpost to truth, especially when we

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are dealing with the higher and the bigger things. In looking for a way to account for what we see and experience in the world, in searching for the first cause and the final reason of things we are bound, sooner or later, to come up against mystery; whether we believe or believe not in God, whether we accept creation as a fact, or, rejecting it, try to discover another way out, we are bound to find ourselves in an intellectual blind alley. And, to take only the lowest view of the matter, it is better and more sensible to put the mystery in its right place than in its wrong, better, that is, to put it on the side of God, who from the nature of the case is infinitely above our comprehension, dwelling in light inaccessible, than on the side of creatures, whom, since they are our kin, we can claim to have some right and capacity to understand. To put the mystery on the side of God does, at least, make other things understandable, and does introduce orderliness into the world we know; to deny God and divine mystery is to bring nothing but confusion and obscurity into the world, and to put a full stop to straight thinking long before it reaches its natural limits.

CHAPTER III

THE CHURCH'S TEACHING ON CREATION IN GENERAL

HAVING thus defined and made as clear as we can what we mean by creation, we go on now to set forth what the Catholic Church teaches on this matter. And in the first instance we shall take the dogma of creation in the most general way, leaving its particular applications to later chapters.

As has already been said, faith in God as the Creator of all things is not exclusive to the Christian religion. It had been held by the Jews from the earliest days of their existence as a separate people, and from them it passed on as the heritage of Christ's Church. But there is no need for us to undertake a searching examination into the teaching of the sacred Scriptures on this point. It is hardly too much to say that in every book of the Bible, from Genesis to the Apocalypse, the creation of all things by God is either explicitly or implicitly asserted. With regard to the Old Testament it is well to note that it is

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unwise to lay too much emphasis upon a particular phrase or a single text, as, for example, the first words of Genesis, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," since the word in the original Hebrew text may not necessarily have the full force of the word as we understand it today. But when the whole context is taken into account, when the witness of the Old Testament is read in the light of our knowledge of other ancient religions and of Eastern mythologies, it becomes quite evident that the Hebrews had a clear and definite faith in God the Creator of all things. In the ancient Eastern religious systems, and especially in the Babylonian, between which and that of the early Hebrews there are several lines of connection, there is found an essential element or a basis of dualism. That is, two original and primeval principles are posited as the necessary beginning of things. These principles, under various names, represent good and evil, light and darkness, spirit and matter. There is conflict and war between the two, and it is only by victory, and a victory that is by no means absolute and complete, that the one principle is enabled to claim and to uphold his rights as the supreme God, to whom all are subject. In such a system of dualism, whatever may be its special characteristics and its accidental variations,

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there is no room for a First Cause who, in absolute independence, brings everything else into being, such as is required by the Christian teaching of God the Creator. But in the Hebrews' Sacred Scriptures there is no trace of any such dualism. Throughout them God is spoken of as supremely independent. He creates by His word without having to overcome the resistance of matter, he rules with sole authority with none to dispute his sway; there is no indication of any primeval strife between him and any ruler of darkness. The earth, the heavens, men, the gods of the Gentiles must render him unquestioning submission; there is no hint or sign of any power whatsoever that can for a moment claim the right of resisting or opposing him. The only possible foundation for such a consistent body of teaching is a firm belief in the dogma of creation by one only omnipotent God. A notable concrete example of this steadfast belief is afforded by the Book of Job. This book presents us with precisely that case which has always been the occasion of one of the strongest objections felt by many against the doctrine of an all-powerful and all-good Creator—the case, namely, of the just and God-fearing man who suffers all sorts of misery and evil, while God's enemies rejoice in prosperity and happiness. If God, being the Creator of

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all things, is the Lord of all, why does he allow such things to be? This is the baffling question that has always troubled men. It is the same question, at least in principle, as was so often asked during recent years, and generally, it is to be feared, in a spirit of defiance; if there be an almighty God, why did he allow the horrors of the War? The answer given by pagan thinkers not professing a pure monotheism always involved some form of dualism. The root and origin of evil, they said, was to be found in the existence of an evil principle, antagonistic to God and putting a limit to his power and goodness. Such, in substance, whatever the varieties in presentation and explanation, was the current religious philosophy of the time. But of any sort of dualism the inspired writer of Job gives not the slightest indication. Philosophically his solution of the problem may not be wholly satisfactory, but from our present point of view it is excellent, for throughout he insists upon God's supreme power and lordship, and upon the fact that he is at liberty to dispose of all things as he will because he is the almighty Creator of all.

In the time of Jesus Christ this belief was so firmly established as an article of the Jewish faith that there was no need for him explicitly to inculcate it. But it is to be found,

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even on a cursory reading of the gospels, as a necessary presupposition of much of his teaching. This is so little contested and so easily verified that we may well be excused any proof of it by actual quotation. When, however, the gospel began to be preached to the Gentiles who did not believe in one God the Creator of all things, it became necessary again to bring this truth to the front; hence, St. Paul, speaking at Athens to materialists and pantheists, gives it an important place in his discourse.¹ Whereas also in his earlier epistles, although the doctrine is often mentioned, it is without any special emphasis,² in the later ones, the situation having changed, it behoved him to explain this truth more fully and carefully. Some false teachers, borrowing the fancies and speculations of the prevalent gnosticism, had begun to disturb the faithful by trying to explain the world by bringing in a multiplicity of semi-divine beings between God and creatures. Hence such passages as Col. i 15 ff., wherein the apostle lays stress upon the universality of God's creative act, from which nothing whatever is excluded, in the heavens or upon the earth, of things visible or invisible.

We may fittingly close this very brief sum-

¹ Acts xvii 18 ff.

² E. g., Rom. i 20, 25, xi 36; 1 Cor. vii 6, etc.

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mary of the teaching of the sacred Scriptures with the unequivocal and sublime witness of St John in the prologue to his gospel:¹ "All things were made by him, and without him was made nothing that was made."

Such being the clear teaching of sacred Scripture, and this doctrine being so fundamental a character, it is not surprising that the Church should have made explicit profession of this faith in the earliest of her formularies of belief, the so-called Apostles' Creed. Scholars, however, are not agreed as to whether the words "Creator of heaven and earth" formed part of the creed from the beginning. The form given by the celebrated writer and translator of the works of the Greek Fathers, Rufinus, who died A. D. 421, omits them; on the other hand, Tertullian, the African apologist and controversialist, in his work *The Prescription of Heretics*, written probably shortly before the year 200, includes them in what is an evident allusion to the creed as used at Carthage, and in all probability at Rome, in the instruction of catechumens. "Let us see," he says (chapter xxxvi), "what she [*i.e.*, the Roman Church] has learnt, what she has taught. She knows one God, the Lord, Creator of the universe," etc. This would be decisive if we could be

¹ John i 3.

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certain that Tertullian is quoting the actual words of the creed, but of that we cannot be sure St Cyril of Jerusalem, in one of his famous *Catecheses* or instructions given to his catechumens, gives the text of the creed as used in his church, as follows, "We believe in one God, the father almighty, maker of heaven and earth," and this instruction dates from about A. D. 325. These words, then, even if they had no place in the creed from the first, were certainly introduced into it at a very early date, and the occasion of their introduction would have been the necessity of definitely rejecting the errors of pagans, gnostics, and others who held materialist and pantheistic opinions.

The third century saw a wide extension of Manicheism. This was a dualistic system according to which the world was produced by two eternal and more or less equal principles, light and darkness, the light being responsible for the spiritual world, which is good, darkness for the material world, which is essentially evil. This, of course, cuts at the very root of the Catholic faith, and as the rapid spread of the system had become a danger to religion, the Fathers assembled in the First General Council at Nicea (A. D. 325) judged it expedient, in drawing up the profession of faith, to proclaim explicitly that God is the

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“Creator of all things, visible and invisible”—that is, of the material as well as of the spiritual world. Strange and absurd as Manicheism seems to us, it has proved a persistent and an alluring form of error, cropping up in one shape or another many times through the centuries, and not yet, seemingly, being wholly extinct. During the Middle Ages the Church had to fight against various manifestations of this perversity. So, for example, in the Fourth Council of the Lateran, held A. D. 1215, setting forth the true faith against the Albigensians and others, she amplified the older creeds, and declared God to be the “one principle of all things, the Creator of all things visible and invisible, spiritual and corporeal, who from the beginning of time, by his almighty power, created from nothing both the spiritual and the corporeal, that is the angelical and the mundane world of creatures, and finally human creatures, as if common to both worlds, being composed of body and spirit.”

Finally it became necessary for the Church once more solemnly to proclaim and define her faith against the false teachings of nineteenth-century atheists, materialists, and sundry sorts of pantheists. To a great extent the decrees of the Vatican Council are a repetition of that of the Fourth Council of the Lateran.

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There are some changes in the arrangement of the text, two or three points are left out as having no longer any bearing on the actual circumstances of the time, while some others, of great importance, are inserted. For example, God *alone* is said to be the Creator of all things, emphasis thus being laid on his independence of all help or instrument; then the concept of creation is made more definite and clear by the assertion that God created all things from nothing, "according to their whole substance." Finally the decree brings in two fresh points of deep theological and spiritual import, in view of definite errors which had lately been propounded, and which, among theologians outside the Catholic Church, are now widespread. The first of these points is God's supreme liberty in creating, the second is the end he had in view in creating, which the Council defines to have been his own glory. These two points we must consider in some detail.

CHAPTER IV

GOD FREELY CREATED THE WORLD TO HIS OWN GLORY

THE freedom of the will is one of the highest prerogatives of men and angels, a gift that distinguishes them fundamentally from the brute creation, and gives them a real likeness to God himself. This freedom has various manifestations, or may be looked at from different points of view. Without going into details or discussing subtle matters that lie outside of our province, we may say that human free will consists in the absence of constraint, in that man is so master of himself that no one can force his will into action against his own inclination or resistance, and no one but himself can determine the direction in which he exercises his will. He has freedom of choice, firstly between action and inaction, or willing and not willing, and secondly between willing one particular object or another. There are, indeed, certain limits to this freedom, as there are to all created perfections, but to discuss these is beyond our

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scope. In so far, however, as it is a positive perfection, it is evident that it must be found in an eminent degree or mode, and without its human limitations, in God. The source of freedom must himself be supremely free. And since God is the First Cause of all things, which he created from nothing, it would only be labouring the obvious to spend time in proving that there was no constraint from without himself forcing him to create the world. What has no existence can exercise no pressure. Mere nothingness cannot constrain. This is common ground to all who believe in God the Creator.

But a further question arises which men have not found so easy to answer, and which, even when rightly answered, is by no means easy to explain. Granted that God be not constrained to create by any power external to himself, may it not be that his very nature, or to speak somewhat loosely, one of his attributes, such as his love, impels him to create? Or, if we shy at the word "impels," may we not at least say that by his nature there is within him such a strong essential tendency to manifest his power and goodness in creatures, that creation becomes a sort of moral necessity? Just as by divine necessity he exists, so by divine necessity he loves. Is there, then, anything in his divine nature which

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would make it incumbent upon his divine love to seek an object outside of itself, to look for an outlet for its overflowing infinity by bringing creatures into existence? Men of genius and piety have not been wanting who have answered affirmatively. Many non-Catholic Christians hold that there is some such necessity, while it is a common element in all pantheistic systems of philosophy. Hence the Vatican Council judged it expedient to define the truth in clear and explicit terms. It lays down that God created by a most free act of the will, and it anathematises those who assert that his will in creating was not free from all necessity, and who say that it was as necessary for him to create as it is for him to love himself. Further, the Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office in the year 1887 reprobated the opinion that God's love gives rise within him to any moral necessity for creating. Here, in passing, we may refer to the volume *God and His Attributes* for further treatment of God's love of himself. It is enough now to point out that it is something wholly different from what is commonly known as self-love in man.

Catholic teaching, then, on this matter of God's absolute freedom in creating is clear. But it is not easy to give a clear and, at the same time, a reasonable and positive explana-

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tion of it. There is no difficulty, however, in establishing a negative proof. The ultimate reason lies in what will be found written in Vol. III of this series about God's nature and attributes. God is sheer, infinite perfection in himself, possessing in himself complete and independent beatitude. Nothing is wanting to the fullness of his happiness. His love, his wisdom, his intelligence, find from eternity absolute satisfaction in the contemplation of his own perfection as he lives and loves, Three in One. But where there are perfection and happiness, full, final, unchangeable, absolute, nothing else can be necessary to their possessor. This is self-evident. If, then, God wills that something else besides himself should exist, it can only be by the supremely free act of his perfect will, uninfluenced by any sort of necessity arising from within his own nature.

We may look at the matter in another way by comparing, as the Vatican Council does, God's love for himself and the act of creation. The former is absolutely necessary, so much so that it would be true to say that if God did not love himself he would not exist. If, then, creation were equally necessary, it would also be true to say that if God were not to create he would not exist; which would be to make the infinite depend upon the finite, the per-

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fect upon the imperfect, and would so be self-contradictory.

Nor is there any moral necessity why God should create. Those who maintain that there is, often argue from the principle that love is of its nature self-communicative, ever seeking an object upon which it may bestow itself. But God is love, the argument proceeds, infinite love; hence there is in him a natural tendency to bestow himself upon objects other than himself, a tendency so strong, since he is perfect love, that if he were to withstand it and withhold himself from self-communication through creation, this would be some derogation from his perfection, and, in some way not easy to define, would constitute a blemish in his nature. The argument is specious and has deceived many. But it has two defects. It is founded on a false analogy drawn from rational creatures, and it neglects a fundamental Christian dogma. An examination of these two defects will show the insufficiency of the argument.

The false analogy lies in this: men are not only rational creatures, but also social beings. No man is sufficient unto himself, and every man is brother to his fellows. Hence men have towards one another mutual duties, to neglect which is sometimes a sin, at other times rather an imperfection. By virtue of these

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duties it is incumbent upon men to communicate to their fellow-men some, at least, of their own possessions, material, moral, and intellectual. Without the fulfilment of such duties human society—that is, natural human life—would become impossible. Yet I use the restrictive phrase “some, at least, of their possessions” advisedly, for man is not bound to give all he has. A very learned man, for example, is under no sort of obligation to communicate all his learning to others. If he does so he fulfils a free counsel of perfection, but if he does not it cannot be imputed to him as a fault.

But there can be no such mutual social obligations between God and merely possible but non-existent creatures, for there is no society wherein they can arise. God cannot possibly be bound by any sort of duty to enrich nothingness with existence.

Again, with man every exercise of any of his faculties is an additional, if accidental, perfection. Life is not stagnation, but action; to stagnate is to lose what one has, and finally to die. A faculty that is not exercised becomes atrophied. Conversely, to act is to acquire, and every time a man acts, even if he acts only to give to another, he really enriches, not only that other, but also himself; by giving he acquires, he grows in per-

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fection. And this is one reason why he is called upon to give, why he falls short of his duty if he does not give, because, namely, he is under an obligation, put upon him by God, to tend to his own perfection. But the same reason cannot apply to God, who, being all perfect, cannot grow in perfection, and being all sufficient to himself and in himself, cannot be enriched by another.

Finally, as has been said, this argument takes no account of a fundamental Christian doctrine, the mystery of the Blessed Trinity. If God were one person only, living in individual solitude and divine loneliness, it might be difficult to resist the contention that, being infinite love, he must seek an object to which to give himself. But as he is not one person but three equal persons the difficulty vanishes, since in the Trinity every tendency and every yearning of love is fully satisfied by the eternal, perfect self-communication of the Godhead from Father to Son and from Father and Son to Holy Ghost, and by the ever active mutual flow of infinite love between the Divine Persons.

God, therefore, cannot lie under any sort of necessity, arising either from within or from without his own nature, to create. If he elects to create it is purely by an act of free choice. So far we have spoken only of what

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is called the liberty of execution, or executive liberty, the freedom of choice between action and non-action. We have now to consider another aspect of free will as it is found in men, and to ask whether it also can be attributed to God. Thus a man may deliberate as to whether he shall go to Brighton for the week-end or stay at home. Having decided, by an act of executive liberty, to go, he now deliberates upon a choice of ways, thus exercising what is called the liberty of specification. He may go by rail, road, sea or air. And if he decides to go by road he has still a wide choice of means before him and may hesitate between a motor-car, a horse, a bicycle, or his own feet. Finally he will choose that way of going which, in all the circumstances, seems to him to be the best, which most adequately meets his desires, his inclinations, his purse, his time, the end in view and so forth. Similarly with regard to God; having seen that, in creating, he enjoys full executive liberty, we have now to ask whether he likewise enjoys full liberty of specification. In other words, was God, having elected to create, in any way bound to create this actual world and this actual order of things, or could he have chosen another? Or, again, is this the best of all possible worlds, and was God therefore obliged to exert his creative

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energy on this, to the exclusion of any other? it might well seem that he was. For since it is the part of wisdom always to choose what is best and highest, or lapse from the rule of wisdom, and since God is perfect wisdom in whom no lapse is possible, it would seem to follow that he must of necessity create the best of all possible worlds.

Although this question is not of such theological and spiritual importance as the last, and although a full discussion of it would lead us into needless subtleties, it cannot be altogether neglected. We must first remark, then, that God is not only the efficient cause of the world, but also its exemplary cause—that is, he not only made it by his power, but he also made it according to the pattern existing in his divine mind, much as an artist produces a picture according to the pattern he has in his mind's eye. The world, then, is a reflection—faint, indeed, but faithful as far as it goes—of the divine mind, and so of God's nature and perfections. But these are infinite, and can therefore never be perfectly reflected or manifested. God's power likewise is infinite. Whence it follows that, however wonderful and great and apparently perfect a world may be created or even conceived, God's perfections are capable of a still greater and higher degree of imitation,

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and God's power is equal to the work of giving actual existence to such a still greater and more wonderful world. In this sense, therefore, the absolutely perfect world is a contradiction in terms. But if we look at the matter in another way our conclusions must be otherwise expressed. Taking a broad view of the universe and looking at it as a whole, and as a manifestation of God's goodness, power, and wisdom, it is impossible to conceive a world in which these could be more faithfully or fully expressed. In the first place, it comprises the only three possible classes of beings—the purely spiritual, the purely material, and man who is both material and spiritual. These three orders of beings exhaust the possibilities. Again, in each order we find a bewildering and marvellous range of degrees of perfection, from the lowest to the highest; in the material order from the simplest to the most complex, from the inanimate through all the grades of the vegetable and animal kingdoms, with uncountable differences and degrees and combinations of perfections. In men, though all have the same nature, there is yet a similar variety of capacities and endowments; and from the little, comparatively speaking, that has been revealed about the angelic kingdom we can deduce, with an approach to certainty, the

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existence therein of a like immense variety of degrees of excellence. It is clear that such a universe, constituted of such a multiplicity of differences combined in one vast harmony, is a fit reflection of God's perfections, corresponding worthily to his wisdom, power, and goodness. It is true that we can conceive of other creatures that he might have created: he might possibly have made a race of flying sheep, or a kind of water that would freeze at sixty degrees, or have created a race of green men as well as white and black and yellow, or have endowed Shakespeare with the military genius of Napoleon and the scientific genius of Newton. But after all these would have been but accidental differences, and it does not appear that they would have expressed any more clearly than does the actual world the infinite perfections of his nature. In fact, it is quite likely that some of these or similar possibilities, if translated into reality, might rather take from than add to the world's perfection, by disturbing its present ordered harmony. All this St Thomas puts very briefly in answering the question whether God could have created things better than he did.

"When it is said that 'God can make a thing better than he makes it, if 'better' is

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taken substantively, this proposition is true. For he can always make something better than what actually exists. Moreover, he can make the same thing in one way better than it is, and in another way he cannot, as was explained in the body of this article [where the author distinguishes between essential and accidental perfections]. If, however, 'better' is taken as an adverb, implying the manner of the making, thus God cannot make anything better than he has made it, because he cannot make it from a greater wisdom and goodness. If, however, it implies the manner of the thing done, he can make something better, because he can give to things made by him a better manner of existence as regards accidentals, not, however, as regards essentials."¹

And again: "The universe, the present creation being supposed, cannot be better, on account of the most beautiful order given to things by God, in which the good of the universe consists. For if any one thing were bettered, the proportion of order would be destroyed, as if one string of a harp were stretched more than it ought to be, the melody would be destroyed. But God could make other things, or add something to the

¹ *Summ. Theol.*, I., Q. xxv., art. 6, ad 1.

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present creation, and then there would be another and a better universe."¹

God, then, is supremely free, both as to creating or not creating, and, given the determination to create, as to the objects to be created. He is bound by no sort of necessity whatsoever. If we seek the sufficient reason for his choice of this universe rather than another, the only reasonable answer possible is that such was his good pleasure. In him his own will is the sole measure and standard of goodness in acting; whatever he does is good just and simply because it conforms to that standard. But since that standard, being divine, is the highest possible, whatever he makes is made according to the best possible pattern, and hence is said to be formally the best thing possible. Such is the actual universe. Yet since the present universe does not exhaust God's mind and strength, another might conceivably be created which would surpass this in beauty, grandeur, and all that goes to the perfection of achievement, and which would, therefore, from the material point of view, be superior.

But this question disposed of, another and a cognate one at once arises: Why did God create the world? It was not from necessity; yet a good and sufficient reason there

¹*Ibid.*, ad 3.

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must have been. The human intellect is so fashioned that, despite the efforts at persuasion of sundry philosophers, it refuses to accept pure chance, mere fortuitousness, as accounting for anything. Almost as soon as its intelligence awakens to conscious life the child begins, in season and out of season, to ask why. The child's parents and teachers may often find its inquisitiveness embarrassing and inconvenient, but it is nothing but the recognition and the proclamation of the eternal principle that *Omne agens agit propter finem* (Everything that acts acts on account of some end). The armchair philosopher, his intelligence perverted by years of misdirected speculation, may raise his voice in protest against the very idea of what he calls teleology, but it is the child with its insistent "why" and continual "what for" who is the mouthpiece of truest wisdom. And, indeed, no sooner do we look at things a little closely than we see that it is the recognition of this principle that lies at the root of all human progress in the sciences and arts of civilisation. It is because we realise that everything is ordained to some end or purpose that we want to discover what that is, and it is this desire that prompts all human investigation into the nature of the physical universe and all human ingen-

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uity and inventiveness. Man only makes a tool or a new machine because he wants to do something with it, and he fashions it for that end.

As soon, then, as we begin to think upon the problem of creation, once we have decided that God made the world and made it impelled by no necessity, we are led to ask why he made it, what purpose he had in view. In answering this question we must carefully distinguish between two things that, though quite different, may be easily confused. The Catechism asks, Why did God make you? and answers, God made me to know him, love him, and serve him in this world and to be happy with him for ever in the next.

This answer might, in part, be extended so as to include not only man, but all creatures, for all creatures are made to serve God according to their own proper ways and fashions, though men and angels alone are made to know and love him, and to be happy with him for ever.

But this is not the end of the matter. We can go further and ask: Why did God make the world for this end, what purpose had he in view in providing this destiny for the world? This is a very different question and brings into view a very different end. Let us illustrate it by an example. An artist

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paints a picture which he hopes to sell. The purpose or end of the picture is to represent a certain scene, and in so far as the representation is a faithful one and conforms to the canons of art—whatever they may be—the picture is a good one and has achieved its end. But the artist's purpose in painting it is by no means achieved if it remains hanging in his studio or is returned unsold from the gallery where he had exhibited it. He painted it to sell, to provide food and clothing for himself and family, and it is only when it is sold and the money is in his pocket that this end is attained. And to make the distinction clearer, and more applicable still to our present subject, we may point out that it does not matter, from this point of view, whether the picture achieves its end or not—whether, that is, it is a good or a bad picture—even if it be thoroughly bad; so long as someone is so foolish or so undiscerning as to buy it at the artist's price, his end is gained.

The Catechism answer, then, as to the end of man (and by extension and adaptation of the world) tells us the end to which man is destined, and that is a matter with which we in this volume have no concern, but which is discussed in Volume IX. But it tells us nothing of God's ultimate purpose and motive in making the world with such a destiny,

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which is the question now at issue. On this point there is no chance of the instructed Catholic going wrong, for he has the Church's teaching defined in the Vatican Council to guide him. It is there laid down that God created the world "neither to increase nor to attain his own beatitude, but to manifest his perfection," and anathema is pronounced against anyone who shall deny that the world was created "unto God's glory." Given the firm Catholic teaching about God, who is "infinite in all perfection," which is the only teaching reasonable and satisfying, no other answer as to why he created the world is possible. God needs nothing, lacks nothing in himself to his perfect happiness. His infinite love and infinite intelligence are fully exercised and satisfied in the ineffable activities of his intimate life as a Trinity of divine persons. The happiness resulting from this exercise and satisfaction, even he, in his omnipotence, cannot possibly increase. He could not, then, create the world in order to attain or to increase his own happiness. The only end, therefore, he could have, was that the creatures whom he made, and to whom he gives existence and all their various perfections, which are in different ways and degrees reflections of and a sharing in his own goodness and perfection, should, by seek-

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ing him, and serving him, and reaching out to him and returning unto him, each according to its own powers and fashions, attain their own ends and so doing show forth his perfection and glory.

And here we may pause a moment to consider the practical application and consequence of this so simple yet sublime teaching. Some philosophers and moralists preach what seems at first sight not only a stern but a pure and selfless morality. They maintain that men should practise virtue without any regard to ultimate reward from God; that this is the highest, indeed, the only true virtue worthy of man; that to be good for fear of hell or hope of heaven is but selfishness disguised, or even a degrading servility. The ancient Stoics taught the same doctrine. It is a doctrine which, by its subtle flattery of man's natural pride, is seductive. It has an appearance of nobility that appeals to the man of upright mind, and it goes well with the spirit of independence. But apart from the fact that it will not work, except on a very small scale, since human nature as a whole is too weak to stand the strain, it is a doctrine that contradicts these fundamental truths that we have been considering. God is man's Creator, and his end in creating him is his own external glory, which consists in

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the manifestation of his divine perfections. The higher the gifts he gives to creatures, the better and more highly are his perfections made manifest. More power and goodness and wisdom are shown in the creation of one human soul than in the whole solar system, because it is a creation of a higher order and one nearer to God's own nature. But, as is shown elsewhere,¹ and here taken for granted, he gives man not only natural but supernatural gifts, the higher nature of sanctifying grace, which is a still more wonderful reflection of himself. And giving him this he means him so to use it that after death it will expand and blossom into the still closer approach to God, the still more perfect assimilation to him, which we call the beatific vision or eternal happiness, which is the highest possible manifestation of divine perfection, apart from the hypostatic union in Jesus Christ, that even the wisdom and power of God can devise and produce. The blessed in heaven are God's greatest glory.

It follows, then, that when a man leads a good life, practises virtue, spends himself in the service of others in the hope of thereby gaining heaven, he is acting not from a selfish motive, not simply to promote his own end, but also and truly to fulfil God's end

¹ Vol. IX of this series.

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in the most perfect way. He is acting for God's glory. His happiness is God's will, and his end is God's glory. And even if this ultimate and higher end is not always openly in view and explicit in intention, it is always implicit and effectually operative, since God has commanded us to seek the kingdom of heaven, and it is his will that we should wish to attain our happiness by promoting his glory. So we see how truly this Catholic teaching of God's supreme liberty in creating and of the end he had in view is at the base of all Catholic morality, asceticism, and the practice of sanctity; since, as a man becomes more perfect by repressing concupiscence and overcoming his passions, as he grows nearer to God and more like him by practising in an ever higher degree every kind of virtue, by so much the more does he make manifest God's perfections and give his Creator the glory due to him.

CHAPTER V

GOD CREATED THE WORLD IN THE BEGINNING OF TIME

ONE other point of Catholic faith remains to be noticed before we pass from this consideration of creation as a whole and in general to the treatment of the various kinds of created things. This is the question whether God created the world from all eternity, as he exists from eternity, or whether it had a beginning in time. It might seem at first that this is a question of a purely metaphysical character or of scientific interest, without any theological, moral, or dogmatic bearing whatever. What can it possibly matter to me whether the world has existed, in some form or another, from eternity or not? What bearing can it have on my life, provided that I acknowledge God as its Creator? Why should the Church go out of her way to define, as she has done, in the Fourth Lateran Council, and again in the Vatican Council, that the world is not coeternal with God, but that he created it in the beginning of time? Surely

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this should be left to the scientists to discover if they can, or to the metaphysicians to argue about as they will. In reality, however, though this matter may have no direct bearing on one's spiritual life, it is closely connected with questions that have, and so it possesses a real theological importance. The doctrine of the non-eternity of the world is intimately bound up with that of God's liberty in creating. For if he had created from some necessity arising from his own nature, the world must have been coeternal with him, since owing to his immutability such necessity would be eternal and eternally necessitating. But if he creates freely, simply from his own free predilection, then as he alone determines to create, and what to create, so also in his free determination lie all the circumstances of creation, among them being the moment of its realisation.

Again the theory of a world existing from all eternity has been invariably in the history of thought bound up either with some sort of Manichean dualism, or else with some kind of materialistic evolutionism, or with some variety of pantheism. Hence the Church has had at different times to condemn the error and proclaim the truth.

But although this clearly is the revealed truth, proclaimed, for example, by Jesus

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Christ himself,¹ it is a truth bristling with difficulties, which, were it not for the gift of faith, might easily result in doubt. For according to Catholic teaching God is from all eternity changeless, and not changeless inaction, but changeless activity and life. If, then, he is now actually creating, he must have been so from all eternity or there would have been a change in him; and if the result of the changeless creative action is now the world, the same must have been the result from all eternity, or else you would have the same changeless action producing no result for a period and then at some determinate instant beginning to produce a result, which would be absurd and impossible. Nor does it seem to be any use to try to escape by saying that the world is created by God, not in so far as he is divine power or divine being, but in so far as he is divine will and freedom. For after all, these distinctions that we make between God's power and his will, as between his justice and his mercy or any other attributes, do not correspond with any real distinctions in him, in whom, apart from the three Divine Persons, everything is supremely one and undifferentiated unity.

The objection is undoubtedly serious, so much so, indeed, that to try to solve it, at

¹ John xvii 5.

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least in such a way that the difficulty disappears, would be useless. The most we can do is to point out wherein the fallacy lies, and to show how the difficulty arises, in part from comparing things that are not comparable, and in part from the fact that it involves two ideas, of which one is beyond our understanding and the other beyond our experience. It may help us also if we first note how the argument used in the objection proves too much, and therefore proves nothing at all. For if it is applicable to the creation of the world in general, it must apply with equal force to the creation of any individual thing—for example, to the creation of each and every individual human soul, each one of which is thereby shown to be eternal, which no Catholic and few Christians of any sort would allow. Or if the example seems to be a begging of the question, consider instead the Hypostatic Union of God and man in Jesus Christ. This was an event which, though not a creation, yet requires the direct exercise of changeless divine power as much as creation itself. Yet it took place, not from eternity, but at a definite moment in time. This consideration, however, does not take us very far. It shows, indeed, that the objection is invalid, but not only does it not help us to its solution, which as I have said is be-

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yond us, but it does not even help to show why it is beyond us. We can, however, see why this is so, and thus gain some relief, if not repose, for the mind, by a brief consideration of the ideas involved in the objection.

One of them is wholly beyond our experience—namely, the idea of the first beginning of all things. We see many beginnings of things, but all of them take place in already existent time. They are all accompanied by and surrounded by movements, by noting which we can place them in their order and date them; thus when we say that one thing begins on Tuesday and another on Wednesday, what we really mean is that these two beginnings are dated or measured by different stages in the relative motions of sun and earth, stages that we mark off as years, months, days, and so forth. Even if we could actually experience the absolute first beginning of a thing as distinct from its development from something already in being, such as the creation of a human soul, we should still be able to place it exactly in its time position, to put it in its proper place in relation to some movement that preceded, accompanied, and followed it. We should still be able to say, supposing we had instruments accurate enough, that up to the end of the

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twenty-seven hundredth part of a second after six o'clock on such and such a date the soul did not exist, but before the twenty-eight hundredth had gone by it was in being, therefore it was created in this twenty-eight hundredth of a second after six o'clock. But we cannot do this when dealing with the absolute first beginning of all created things. We cannot date it by working backwards on any evidence. Geologists trying to date a geological period have to be content with approximations covering thousands of years. And if we try to work back in thought and imagination we soon find ourselves groping. All we can do is to say that if we go back so many thousands or millions of years we come to a time when the universe was only a day old, or what would have been a day, if there had been the sun, working as it is now, to measure it, of which we cannot be sure. We can now work backwards through this day to its first hour, its first minute, its first second, and then we drop off into a blank which leaves us baffled. We cannot say that we come to the beginning of time and find it dated by a certain fixed point in eternity. We cannot say that God had existed for so many ages of eternity and then created the world. We are brought up dead against this idea of eternity;

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which is the second idea involved in the objection, and which is beyond our comprehension. Time and eternity are not two similar and comparable sorts of duration differing only in having and not having a beginning and an end. There is no ration, no proportion, no standard of comparison between the two. Time consists in motion, it is the measure of motion according to succession; without things moving, and so moving as to be relative to each other in their movements, there can be no time. But eternity is without movement or succession, it cannot be split up into periods, it has no measure, it overrides and embraces all time, it has no past and no future, it is all and always present. In fact, there is no such *thing* as eternity in the same sense as there is such a thing as time; there is an Eternal who is God, and eternity is a name we give to an abstraction when we wish to speak of God under the aspect of duration. And God is incomprehensible. We can see then why it is impossible fully to understand this matter of the creation of the world in time: it is because it is simply a special aspect of the whole question of the relation between God and the universe, the Creator and the creature, the Infinite and the finite, and that must remain a mystery, or God would be no God.

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We have now reviewed the principal points of doctrine arising from an examination of the created universe taken as a whole. We must now turn to the creation of the various distinct kinds of things that go to make up the universe, and this will introduce us to sundry matters that are nowadays much discussed.

CHAPTER VI

THE DISTINCTION OF THINGS

ST THOMAS, whose arrangement we have been more or less closely following, prefaces his treatment of the creation of the various classes of beings by a brief enquiry, first into the authorship of the multiplicity and variety that distinguish the world, and then into the cause of the great primary distinction between good and evil. This latter question, as far as it lies with us to touch it, will more conveniently be taken at the end of this volume; the former will detain us but a very short while. In so far as we are expounding Catholic dogma and neither the free opinions cherished by private theologians nor, much less, the speculations of scientists or philosophers, all we need say on this point may be put under two or three heads. Firstly, that God is the immediate cause of the threefold division according to which the whole universe is classified under the material, the spiritual, and the composite. (As to the last class, namely men, a little more must be said later.) This is clear from the definitions of

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the Fourth Lateran and the Vatican Councils and from other pronouncements of authority.

Secondly, that he is the author of all the different natural varieties to be found within each of these three classes. But here a distinction must be made. He is, of course, the immediate author of the different grades of angels,¹ since each angel must of necessity be a separate, distinct creation. But it is no part of Catholic faith that he is in the same way the immediate author of all the multiplicity of variations, from the simplest elements of the inorganic world to the highest animals, that comprise the visible universe. It is not Catholic dogma that all of these, or any of them (with certain reservations, to be noted later, as to man), are the products of distinct acts of creation by God. In other words, the Catholic Church allows scope for the theory and the working of evolution. But yet God is the author of all this multiplicity and variety, in the sense that, granting the truth, by no means proved, of such universal evolution it still remains true that the development has been worked out along the lines intended and determined by God, in virtue and by means of the natural forces and ten-

¹ Vol. VIII of this series will be devoted to the angels; to this readers are referred for a full treatment of this question.

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dencies implanted by him in the primeval matter which he created, under the direction of his all-pervading providence, and under the continuous impulse of his sustaining omnipotence, the withdrawal of which for an instant would mean the annihilation of all things.

Finally, it is also part of the Catholic faith that certain differences and inequalities now existing are not due to God's creative action and are contrary to what is called his primary intention. These are the differences that consist in various sorts of defects which are evil. Thus all the angels were created good, and the devils became bad solely by the free abuse of their liberty. So likewise it cannot be doubted that many of the purely natural evils that afflict the world are the result of human sin and of the sinful activities of men, and in this way, being evil, are not the result of God's creative action. But of this more later.

Provided, then, that he avoids such crudities of thought as are commonly denoted by such phrases as the struggle for existence, natural selection, etc., by which divine oversight and direction are generally meant to be excluded, the Catholic is free to think and to speculate as he likes on the question as to the immediate causes of the world's variety.

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If he is wise, he will confine himself to facts and evidence and go no farther in assertion than strict proof allows. But if he wishes to indulge his fancy, he may do so without sinning against the faith. This will become clearer from what is to be said in the next chapter. Meanwhile one more point arises for discussion here.

It has become quite common to take more or less for granted the truth of the hypothesis of either the existence of other worlds in the solar system, inhabited by men like ourselves, or else the existence of other systems beyond the limits of the solar system, in one or more of which the conditions of the earth are repeated in all that concerns animal and human life. And from this unproved hypothesis the conclusion is drawn that, since traditional Christianity is essentially geocentric and looks upon the earth as the sole theatre of the Incarnate Word's activity and, indeed, as the only scene of God's revelation and dealings with men, it must be changed, or, to use the favourite modern word, restated, in order to bring it into line with the advance of astronomical science. Hence there is some theological interest in the question whether the world be one, in the sense of being unique. But for Catholics it is not of great importance, and hitherto the Church

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has had no occasion to speak upon the matter. Scientifically the existence of other inhabited worlds is purely theoretical. Revelation, so far as it has been made to us, concerns this world alone, neither including nor excluding any other but wholly abstracting from it. If it should turn out to be true that there is another world or twenty more, Christianity will not be affected in the least. If other worlds exist we know that they, like ours, must have been created by God and must be ruled by his providence; and whatever theory we may choose to apply to their human inhabitants, whether their spiritual history and experiences be similar to ours or not, we know that God will have provided for their needs, as he has for ours, in a manner befitting his infinite wisdom, justice, and love. More than this it is impossible to say. But, whatever be the facts, the Christian religion will need no "restatement," because it, as well as God's revelation in the Old Testament, concerns and affects this world alone. So no Catholic needs to be disturbed in his faith, whatever wonderful discoveries astronomy may yet make.

CHAPTER VII

THE STORY OF CREATION

WE come now to what many will probably look upon as the most important part of our task. We have to examine the story of the creation of the world, from the first chaos to the making of man, as it is told in the beginning of the Book of Genesis. How is this story to be understood? How can it be reconciled with what is now known and accepted by all, Catholics as well as others, of the physical history of the universe, and especially of the earth, of the living things, vegetable and animal, that dwell on it? How can we pretend that there can be any real reconciliation between the Catholic doctrines of the inspiration and the inerrancy of sacred Scripture and the biblical story of creation when this is subjected to the test of scientific knowledge? Many Catholics, perhaps most of them, are prepared to accept it as true that there must be a reconciliation, that the theologians, at least, must know how to solve these difficult questions, and to acquiesce in

leaving the matter to them, and not worrying themselves about it any farther. Such an attitude, while most creditable to their faith and their trust in the Church, cannot be satisfactory intellectually, and may often be dangerous to themselves and others. It is therefore necessary for us to deal with it in so far as it has any bearing upon Catholic doctrine. Though it still has its difficulties and is still a question of some delicacy, yet, happily, it is not so formidable by far as it would have been some forty or fifty years ago. On the one hand, the advance of both scientific knowledge and of biblical studies has put out of court certain ideas and theories that were wont to cause heated discussion; and on the other, the enlightened wisdom of Pope Leo XIII and his successors, in laying down the true principles of interpretation and in definitely settling some points, has made it easier for Catholics to defend the faith, removed sundry causes of domestic disagreement, and on certain matters enlarged the boundaries in which they may move freely without incurring suspicion of disloyalty to faith or Church.

The first thing to do is to state the problem as clearly and succinctly as possible. In the first chapter of Genesis the sacred writer tells

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the story of the creation of the world and all it contains. His narrative is divided according to the works done by God on each of six days. It may be thus analysed. First of all comes the primary work, the creation of heaven and earth in a state of chaos and darkness. Then comes the work of differentiation, in three divisions. The work of the first day is the creation of light, and its separation from darkness, day and night. The work of the second day is the creation of the firmament, which is called heaven, and the division of the waters beneath it from those above. The work of the third day is the gathering together of the waters and the appearance of the dry land, or the division of land and sea. To this the writer adds a kind of supplement in the production of plants, trees, and fruits.

After this comes the adornment and furnishing of the different parts of the world, with a similar threefold division. The work of the fourth day is the creation of the heavenly luminaries, the sun, moon, and stars, to rule the day and night and divide light from darkness. The fifth day sees the production of fish in the waters and birds under the heavens. On the sixth day are produced the various sorts of beasts and reptiles that

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people the earth, and finally man, male and female. The seventh day is consecrated to rest from labour.

No one can help admiring the sublime simplicity of this story. And the more we learn of the accounts preserved by other ancient people wherein are narrated the beginnings of the world, the greater by comparison appears the nobility of this Hebrew narrative as well as the purity of the religious teaching therein enshrined. Unfortunately, however, it does not seem to fit the facts as we know them or are slowly learning them. The most obvious discrepancy is, of course, the fact that the world, instead of being made and completely furnished in six days, must have existed for unknown ages before man appeared on the earth. Among other defects of the narrative viewed in the light of present knowledge we may note the creation of plants and trees on the third day; and that of the sun, which is necessary to plant life, on the fourth; the creation of light and its separation from darkness on the first day, four days before the creation of the sun and heavenly bodies, the source of light. Again, all forms of vegetable life are said to be created together on one day, the third, and similarly all animals on another day, the sixth, whereas science proves that the production of plant life ex-

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tended through immense periods of time, and was to a great extent coincident in time with that of animal life. There are other points of disaccord which need not be specified.

On the other hand, the inerrancy, the objective truth of the whole of Scripture and all its parts, is one of the fixed and traditional elements of Catholic teaching, reaffirmed more than once, and in strong terms, by the Popes during the past thirty years. Then, again, the Biblical Commission, specially constituted by the Pope to deal with difficult points of scriptural interpretation, and speaking with an authority which, though not infallible, no loyal Catholic will reject or contest, has laid it down that these early chapters of Genesis are truly historical in form and contents, and that we cannot hold that they narrate, instead of actual facts corresponding to objective reality and historic truth, either fables borrowed from old pagan mythologies and cosmogonies, or merely allegories and symbols propounded under historical form in order to teach religious or philosophic truth, or legends in part historical and in part fictitious, made up for the instruction and edification of souls. This is more or less a translation of the second and longest of the series of eight decisions issued by the Biblical Commission in 1909.

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And when the Catholic has read so far, he will probably begin to feel that whatever chance there may have been of reconciling Genesis and modern knowledge, to say nothing of some theories which, though not certain, are at any rate highly probable, has wholly gone. He will perhaps begin to think that if he is to remain a faithful and obedient Catholic he will have to cut himself off from all sorts of modern scientific thought, to throw overboard the most widely accepted scientific explanations of things, and to live a life of intellectual stagnation in company with his few fellow-Catholics. But as he reads on he will see a little light breaking before him. He will find that he still has some liberty of interpretation in those places as to which there has never been agreement or definite teaching among the Fathers and Doctors, and that he is not bound to the literal sense where it is clear that this would not be reasonable. When at last he reads the seventh decree, the dawn will broaden into the full light of day and the way will lie clear before him. This decree runs as follows: "Since it was not the intention of the sacred writer to teach the inmost constitution of visible things, or the complete order of creation, in a scientific manner, but rather to give to his countrymen a popular

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notion, conformable to the ordinary language of those times, and adapted to their opinions and intelligence, we must not always and regularly look for scientific exactitude of language when interpreting this chapter." This is no new departure in Catholic methods of interpretation. It is merely an application of the principle laid down by Pope Leo XIII in his encyclical *Providentissimus Deus*, that the Holy Ghost, speaking through the inspired writers, did not wish to teach men the truths of physical science—the inmost constitution of visible things—since they are of no profit to their eternal salvation. Nor was Pope Leo an innovator in thus speaking, for he was but repeating the ideas and language of St. Augustine. The sacred Scriptures, then, according to authoritative and traditional Catholic teaching, are not meant to be taken as books for the instruction of men in the physical sciences.

When it happened that the inspired writer had, incidentally, to touch upon such matters, to enforce or illustrate his teaching, to set it in a framework that should make a deeper impression upon his readers, or for some similar reason, he adapted himself to the level of their intelligence, he conformed his phraseology to their common (that is, their uneducated and often false) opinions,

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he took over their current modes of expression. Humanly speaking he had to do this, or he would not have been understood by those whom it was his business to instruct, but in so doing he gives thereby no guarantee whatever that the expressions he uses, relating to the physical constitution of material things, correspond to actual physical reality. Such expressions are merely the vehicle of religious truth, rather than the proclamation of scientific truth. A good example occurs in the use of the current notion of the firmament, as we shall shortly see.

Guided by these principles, armed with their authority, and safe in the assurance which that authority gives, the Catholic can now proceed to the interpretation of this story of creation in such a way as to safeguard all that the Church teaches about the inviolable truth of sacred Scripture, without at the same time violating or contradicting any proved truth of the physical sciences. Among the different interpretations proposed in recent years by competent and approved theologians, I shall speak in detail of but one, since my object is to expound the Catholic faith, not the free opinions of theologians; and the sole reason for introducing at all what is but an opinion of some theologians, is that so the reader may have at command,

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not only the principles he must hold, but also an example of their application in a matter that to some might prove disturbing.

According, then, to this interpretation, the sacred writer composed his narrative upon a plan chosen by himself. His main thesis is that the world and everything in it was created by God. This it is that he wished to impress upon the minds of his countrymen, so as to preserve them from the errors and fancies current among the surrounding Gentiles. To express this the more clearly and vividly he chose the ordinary popular division of the universe into three elements, the heavens, the waters, the earth. In each of these three parts he pictures the work of creation as proceeding by stages. The first stage is the creation of all three divisions in a state of chaos (vv. 1, 2). The second stage is the work of discrimination, which is realised in the heavens by the division of light and darkness; in the waters by the separation of the higher waters from the lower, by means of the firmament, which was conceived as a solid canopy stretched across the heavens; in the earth by the segregation of the sea from the land; while this is completed by the production of trees and plants, which, as springing from the soil, were regarded more as an integral part of the dry land than as

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a mere adornment of it. He then takes the threefold division again and summarises the work of their adornment or furnishing: the heavens are filled with sun, moon and stars; the waters are occupied by fishes (and here he introduces the birds as the living ornaments of the air); while the land is peopled by all sorts of animals and finally by man.

So is completed the whole work, with its three main stages, each containing three secondary divisions, always in the same order—heavens, waters, earth. The second and third main stages comprise, therefore, six divisions, to each of which is assigned a day. Such an arrangement, with its evident striving after symmetry, though of course not impossible in reality, certainly appears highly artificial, and to be adopted by the writer with the practical aim of making a deeper and more lasting impression upon the minds of a people who, like children, could understand a picture-story much better than a scientific disquisition. As for the “days,” the “mornings” and “evenings,” they would be, on this interpretation, an element of the writer’s artificial plan, chosen to exhibit creation as the type or model of the week given to work, followed by the repose of the Sabbath. They represent, therefore, six moments or impulses of God’s creative activity rather than any defi-

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nite periods of time. With this interpretation, all the objections brought against the Mosaic account of creation from the physical sciences collapse. As it is a religious document in popular language, with no scientific object, it contains no scientific teaching and cannot therefore contradict scientific truth. The creation of all things by God is not a truth of physical science, but of philosophy, as has already been noted. We can therefore, in accordance with the teachings of science, or, if we like, of mere scientific theories, rearrange the order of the development of the world and its forms of life. We can lengthen out the astronomical periods of the solar system and the geological periods of the earth's history to as many millions of years as we choose, and we shall not be contradicting Genesis. If we think that the evolutionists have proved their case, or even that they have gathered evidence enough to make it prudently tenable, we may hold that from the lowest protoplasm to the highest animals there has been a continuous progress and evolution, either gradually or with occasional leaps, and by the instrumentality of any natural means that we may prefer, and, upon one condition, we shall not be rebellious to the Holy Ghost speaking through the mouth of Moses. This one condition is that we ex-

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empt nothing and no process from God's creative and directive activity, and acknowledge him, working through the powers of nature which he has made, as Lord and Creator of all.

CHAPTER VIII

THE CREATION OF MAN

So far as we have gone in our review of the work of creation we have taken no account of the origin of man. This question, of course, has a special importance of its own, and theological implications of no mean gravity. Also, its treatment needs particular care in view of the distinctions which must be made between man as a whole and his two component parts, body and soul, since the teaching of the Church is not equally definite about all the different points involved.

We proceed first to take the question of the origin of the first human couple, man and woman, leaving till later the little that needs to be said about subsequent generations. And as the aim of this book is an exposition of Catholic faith, other aspects of the matter in hand will not be touched, except in so far as they are necessary to an understanding of the faith and its implications. In their own spheres philosophy and the physical sciences have much to say about

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man's origin, but our concern is not with them, except by way of occasional contact.

In view of the extreme looseness of language and thought among so many modern proponents of current theories, we must be careful to define our terms strictly. Speaking, then, of the origin of man, we understand man to be a unity, one substance, composed of two distinct and different elements, one material, the other immaterial or spiritual, commonly called body and soul. He is as much one substance as water or wood or a horse is one substance; but there is an immensely greater difference between his two component elements, body and soul, than between the various different elements making water, wood, or a horse. All of these are material, and as such can be measured and counted and weighed, and are subject to all the laws that scientific investigators have discovered as ruling the whole material universe. But while man's body is akin with these, and is itself made up of the same material elements as they are, his soul is in a wholly distinct category and world. It has nothing in common with material things, nor is it subject to any of the laws which they must obey. It cannot be seen, weighed, or measured; even its existence and its nature can be known by us only by the use of the power,

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seated in itself, of observing its operations in ourselves, and thence arguing to its being and character. All this we try to express by saying that it is non-material or spiritual. Yet these two disparate elements combine to form a real unity, man, as was laid down explicitly in formal philosophical terms by the Fifteenth General Council, that of Vienne, in A. D. 1312. I have insisted on this, only to make it clear that man does not and cannot exist until the soul indwells and gives human life to the body. Whatever origin or process of formation we may, for the moment, and by way of hypothesis, assign to body and soul, it must be remembered that, until the two come together and coalesce in one living unity and substance and being, there is no man. It is important to keep this in mind, as it has a bearing on the understanding of ecclesiastical documents and definitions which are always drawn up with strict regard to accuracy of phraseology.

As far, then, as concerns man, understood in this sense as a whole and one substance, the Church has spoken with infallible authority in the Vatican Council, besides making her mind known in other and less solemn ways. The Vatican decree lays down that "God created from nothing both sorts of creatures, the material and the spiritual . . . and

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then (*deinde*) the human creature, as it were partaking of both, being composed of spirit and body." This decree teaches that the creation of man was distinct from and subsequent to (*deinde*) that of the angels and the purely material world. It implies necessarily that the first man's soul, by which he was essentially and formally constituted in human nature, was due to a distinct divine creative act, by which it was drawn into being from sheer nothingness. This, also, is the evident teaching of the Holy Ghost speaking through Moses in Gen. ii 7: "And the Lord God . . . breathed into his [*i. e.*, man's] face the breath of life, and man became a living soul." This first point, then, is clear and fixed: Adam's soul was created directly and immediately by God from nothing. This is as much a part of Catholic teaching as it is a truth of sane philosophy. To deny it would be to rebel against the Church's authority, as well as to reject the dictates of sound reason. For a Catholic there can be no question and no debate about the hypothesis or even the possibility of the development of Adam's spiritual soul from the non-spiritual animating principle or soul of any brute, however highly advanced in the scale of animal perfection. The theory of evolution taken universally, as embracing the develop-

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ment of the first man's soul from some non-human faculty of one of the higher animals, is out of court for the Catholic; and far from feeling this a restriction of his intellectual and human freedom, he is grateful to the Church, which, by her authoritative pronouncements, keeps him to the broad high-road of common sense and saves him from aimless wanderings down all the blind alleys of human folly.

When, however, we go on to consider the origin of Adam's body we enter a region where the definite certainty that obtains concerning his soul is lacking. This arises in part from the nature of the case, and in part from the nature of the available evidence. Clearly the origin of man's body can have, of itself, no such grave theological and spiritual implications as are necessarily involved in the origin of his soul. That his body came into existence in this way or that is a matter of historical truth and of scientific interest, but whether it was this way or that has, in itself, no direct theological bearing. But the Church, though she can, as the sole authoritative interpreter of Scripture, determine the meaning of any passage dealing with historical fact or scientific truth, when it is necessary or expedient, in order, for example, to safeguard some religious truth involved in a

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statement of fact, yet has, by virtue of her divine commission, no direct interest in purely historical and scientific questions as such. When, therefore, such a matter arises the question to be decided comes to this: Does the Holy Ghost through the inspired writer teach clearly, and mean us to accept as revealed truth, that such an event actually took place, or that such an assertion is a scientific fact? If he does, there is no more to be said, since God cannot err. But if there be any doubt as to whether that be his intention, then unless and until the matter is decided by the Church's divine authority, the Catholic is free, within the limits and subject to the conditions laid down to be observed in such cases, to understand the passage in the way that seems best. And so long as the Church gives no decision, diversities of interpretation and fluctuations of opinion are bound to occur.

What, then, is to be said concerning the origin of Adam's body? In the first place, it is certain that by far the greater part of Catholic thought, both through the ages and at the present day, favours the opinion that Adam's body was produced immediately and directly by God's act. The reasons for this are obvious; such seems to be the plain literal meaning of Gen. ii 7, "And the Lord God

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made man from the slime of the earth," and such an origin seems most fitly to accord with man's natural dignity and his supernatural destiny both of soul and body. And there can be little doubt, if any, that in the present state of our knowledge it is prudent and wise for Catholics as a body to retain this general and traditional opinion. For unless there be a prudent reason for so doing, it is rash to depart from a view which has commended itself to the minds of so many Christian generations.

In this instance no cogent reason exists. Far from it. For against this traditional view there stands nothing but the theory of evolution, as to which it cannot be too often repeated that, despite the claims of many of its supporters, it is still a theory only, having, indeed, some indefinite degree of probability, but no sort of certainty: while if we take it as covering all forms of animal life and so embracing the origin of the human body, the positive evidence in favour of it is, at present, so slight and feeble as to be negligible.

We might leave the question at that, but it may be useful to carry it a step further. It has often been asked if there is anything in the Church's teaching to prevent a Catholic from holding man's body to be a devel-

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opment from one of the higher animals, if this should ever be proved to be a scientific fact. If the question is put in this way the answer must, of course, be a simple No, for the teaching of the Church, being divinely preserved from error, can never run contrary to anything proved to be a fact, in any field whatsoever of human knowledge. The question, then, should be differently framed. Is there anything in the Church's teaching to prevent a Catholic from holding the said theory concerning the human body, and so to make it certain that this can never be proved to be a fact?

The Vatican decree already quoted is by no means definite on this point. It does not say that Adam's body was immediately or directly produced by God from nothing, nor does it say anything about the process by which God fashioned it, or about the state or condition to which it had been brought, whether by direct divine agency or other means, at the moment when God breathed into it a living, human soul. As a consequence of this, and because the evolutionary hypothesis appealed to them, some few Catholic theologians set forth views on the origin of man's body more or less in agreement with current evolutionary theories. And, although in one or two cases writers had their works

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condemned or were called upon to retract their opinions, in no instance did it clearly appear that a condemnation, issued officially by one of the Roman Congregations, fell precisely on the point now under discussion—namely, that Adam's body was the term of a process of development, rather than the result of a special and particular divine creative or formative act.

The only other authoritative pronouncement is the decree of the Biblical Commission (No. 3) which forbids a Catholic to call in doubt the literal and historical sense of those passages in the first three chapters of Genesis wherein are narrated facts which touch the foundations of the Christian religion, among others mentioned being "the special creation of man, the formation of the first woman from the first man, the unity of the human race." We must see whether this decree has made any real change in the situation, to the extent of making it impossible for a Catholic to hold that Adam's body was the term of a process of natural, though God-directed, development, and that God took one of the higher animals and, by infusing into it a human soul, made it a man.

A Catholic evolutionist, recalling what has been said about the oneness of man's substance and the impossibility of man's exis-

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tence until the soul indwells and vivifies the body, and claiming, as he is entitled to do, that ecclesiastical decrees which restrict liberty are to be interpreted strictly and narrowly, might contend that since this decree speaks of the creation of "man," and says nothing about his body, he is still free to hold that this latter was the result of an evolutionary process. Also he might argue that the literal historical sense of Gen. ii 7 is not absolutely certain, since first, according to the Hebrew, it does not read "God made man from the slime [or dust] of the earth," but "God made man slime [or dust] from the earth," which may be variously understood; and secondly, that, whereas it is certain that not all animals were made immediately from the earth by God, yet Gen. ii 19 asserts that they were. Hence, invoking the seventh decree of the Commission that it was not the inspired writer's intention to impart scientific knowledge of the whole of creation, he may conclude that this passage about man is one of those wherein we are not to look for the accuracy of scientific language.

Whether such a position be reasonable, especially in view of the absence of any real scientific evidence in favour of the evolutionary descent of man's body, and of the

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many difficulties against it, is one question which, however, it is not within our province to debate. Another and quite distinct question is whether such a position is to be condemned as offending against, I do not say the Catholic faith, but against the loyalty and obedience owing to ecclesiastical authority as vested by the Pope in the Biblical Commission. All things considered, it would seem that the answer must be in the negative, and that unless and until authority should speak more clearly and definitely, freedom of opinion and discussion on this point are still allowable.

In other words, the Church gives us in this matter evidence of that truly divine prudence which characterises all her actions. When the faith is assailed she speaks promptly, decisively, clearly. When the matter in debate does not appear to imperil the faith, even though some among her children may scent danger, she waits. In her regard for man's dignity, she will not curb his intellectual freedom; in her anxious care for the faith of the timorous or more sensitive souls she impresses upon all the necessity of singleminded loyalty to truth in research, of sobriety in language, and of the spirit of obedience to her authority.

As for the production of the first woman's

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body, a few words will be enough. The decree of the Biblical Commission particularly mentions the "formation of the first woman from the first man" as one of the instances wherein the literal historical sense of sacred Scripture may not be called in question. The reasons are plain. Firstly, the literal interpretation of the passage is presupposed or confirmed in many other places in Scripture, as when St Paul, addressing the Athenians, says¹ that God "hath made of one, all mankind," or, writing of the relations of man and woman, reminds the Corinthians² that "the man is not of the woman, but the woman of the man."

Secondly, this truth has considerable dogmatic importance; Catholic teaching about the sacrament of matrimony and about the intimate union of Christ and the Church is closely bound up with it, illumined and strengthened by it. Beyond this it needs only to be said that within the ambit of this literal meaning does not lie the "rib" from Adam's side, since the exact meaning of the Hebrew word used is doubtful. Here, also, we may note that the Biblical Commission mentions the unity of the human race as a point as to which the historical, literal sense of Genesis is not to be doubted. This is, if not actually

¹ Acts xvii 26.

² 1 Cor. xi 8.

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a part of Catholic faith, at least an example of what theologians call dogmatic facts. That is, it is a fact so closely bound up with a defined dogma that to deny the one is to reject the other. Let it be allowed that from the time of Adam onwards there have been any men dwelling upon the earth who were not his descendants, and it becomes impossible to hold the Catholic dogma of original sin, or that of the Redemption embracing the whole of and limited to the race of Adam. But since the Church is the guardian of the faith, she clearly must have the right, which indeed she has often exercised, of authoritatively stating such matters of historical fact as are necessary for the holding or the defence of revealed dogmas of faith.

It may here usefully be added that the Church has defined nothing with regard to the antiquity of man, or the number of years that have passed since Adam's creation. She does not guarantee or assert that the list of the early patriarchs, with their ages given in the Book of Genesis, is meant as a complete and mathematically accurate record, from which any certain conclusion as to the date of man's first appearance upon the earth can be drawn. In this matter an attitude of prudent reserve, which includes a willingness to accept proved facts but a determination to

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take a large dose of salt with all unproven theories, is that best fitted to the Catholic mind, temper and tradition.

When we pass on to the origin and mode of production of the souls of all of Adam's descendants we come to a question the interest of which is now mainly historical.

Leaving aside such errors as that attributed to the great Origen, who held that all human souls, as well as all angels, were created simultaneously from the beginning; and that promulgated by certain early heretics, who taught that they were some kind of emanation from God's own substance; and that imputed to Tertullian, that the soul is, like the body, the result of generation, errors more than once condemned by the Church—we must say a few words about an opinion once somewhat widely held in the Church itself, and the subject of controversy between two such celebrated Doctors as St Jerome and St Augustine. The immediate occasion of the discussion was the denial of original sin by Pelagius and his followers. St Augustine, as the great champion of the faith, was forced into the investigation of the way in which original sin was handed on from father to son, and found himself faced with a difficulty. St Jerome, consulted by him, pronounced unequivocally in favour of crea-

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tionism—that is, the opinion that each human soul is created directly and immediately by God, at the very instant of its infusion into the body, or more accurately, perhaps, that it is created *in* the body. St Augustine, though willing to be persuaded and, indeed, inclined to the same opinion, was not convinced. Since original sin is in the soul, he argued, if this is directly created by God, how can he be acquitted of, at least, part complicity in the production of sin? Unable to solve the difficulty, he clung to the possibility of the theory that the soul of the child is produced by the parent's soul, not, however, by its own natural power, but by virtue of a special power given it by God. St Augustine's great authority gave to this opinion a longer life than its own worth deserved, but it was afterwards abandoned, and on two or three occasions when it has been revived, even in a modified form, the writers responsible have been required to retract. Consequently there is no doubt that, though not explicitly defined by the Church, the direct creation by God of each soul at the moment when the body is ready to receive it, appertains to the substance of the Catholic faith. But as to when this moment is, and at what stage of parental development the body becomes vivified by the creation of

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its rational soul, is a question still open to free debate.

We have now reviewed the questions connected with the various categories into which the material world may be divided, as the object of God's universal and still active creative energy. But one great question still remains.

CHAPTER IX

EVIL

"AND God saw all things that he had made and they were very good."¹ And yet the history of the world is, to a very great extent, a record of evil. The world is, and always has been, full of all sorts of evil. There is no need to enlarge on this, but the questions insistently prompted by the fact must be faced. The whole of our task so far has been to expound and thereby to extol God's power, and implicitly his wisdom and goodness, as the Creator of all things in heaven and earth. But how can these be reconciled with the existence of so much and such terrible evil? To glorify his creative omnipotence seems inevitably to detract from his goodness, or his goodness can apparently be saved only at the expense of his wisdom. This problem has worried men from ages immemorial. Within the few pages that remain it is impossible to do more than try to lay down a few principles which will help us

¹ Gen. i 31.

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to maintain a balanced mind in the face of a mystery the depth of which we cannot hope to fathom this side of the grave, while for a fuller treatment the reader is referred to Vol. VII, *Divine Providence*.

The first thing to note is the nature of evil, of whatever kind it be. If we hold it to be something actual and positive, we are at once placed in difficulties with no way of escape. For everything that is positive must have a positive cause to produce it. So with evil, if it be a positive thing, either it is produced by God or not. If God is its cause, we must either say that he is not almighty and made evil because he could not help it, or else that he is not all good or all wise, or we must take refuge in some sort of pantheism. In any event pessimism must be the logical result. If God be not its cause, there must be some other cause or principle whence it depends, the principle of evil, and we must embrace Manicheism or some sort of dualism and again, therefore, reject God's omnipotence. In any event Christianity must go.

Hence, because it is the only sound position, and the only way to avoid contradiction, Catholic philosophy and theology have always held that the essential nature of evil is nothing positive, but consists rather in that particular sort of negation that is called a

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privation, and is defined as the absence of a good that ought to be present. A bad apple is an apple without its due and proper soundness, sweetness, or other proper quality; blindness is an evil because it means the absence of powers of vision that ought to be present; and an act of the will is evil or sinful because it is an act deprived of its due and proper relation to God as the standard by which all acts of the will should be measured and the end to which all should be directed. Evil, then, is not a positive thing. But neither is it a mere negation. It is the absence in a positive thing of some good quality that ought to be there present. There is, then, no such *thing* as evil or badness, any more than there is such a *thing* as goodness; there are bad things, which would be good things if they did not lack some quality they ought to have. Consequently, also, nothing can be wholly bad. In so far as it is existent, actual, positive, it is good. If it were wholly bad, it would be wholly lacking—that is, non-existent altogether. Bearing in mind these principles, which, though philosophically elementary, are often neglected, we can attack the problem before us, and since moral evil or sin is the greatest evil we take that first.

From what has been said above about God's

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liberty in creating it is clear that he was under no necessity to create creatures gifted with free will, angels and men. If he did create them, it was because such was his good pleasure, because he wished in this way to manifest his perfections, because he wished to be praised, adored, and loved freely by friends and not by automata, and because he wished to raise such creatures to a share in his own divine eternal life and happiness. If we ask further why he wished this, there is no answer; we simply do not and cannot know. But God's determination to create free creatures brings us at once face to face with an impenetrable mystery. How can we explain the coexistence of real created freedom on the one hand, and divine omnipotence and God's universal, all-penetrating and effective causality on the other? No one has been able to explain this yet, and no one will. But we know that the two things are real and must accept them unexplained. Given, however, the existence of a created free will, sin at once becomes possible, with a possibility that even God cannot prevent. A created free will which cannot sin, unless it be in possession of the beatific vision, is a contradiction in terms. Here a word of warning may be useful against a false and mis-

chievous idea common among modern non-Catholic theologians. God, they say, by the fact of creating free creatures who are able to rebel against him, thereby puts a limit to his own omnipotence. The phrase shows a misunderstanding of divine omnipotence. They might just as well say that he limits his omnipotence by creating two and two which even he cannot make to equal five. When we assign omnipotence to God we simply mean that he can do all things that are not self-contradictory. He is therefore as fully almighty in the face of a rebellious world as he would be if no men existed.

The choice, then, lay before God: to create free creatures was to make sin possible; to make sin impossible meant to abstain from creating free creatures. He chose the former of the two alternatives, and who can dare to say that he would have done better to choose the latter?

Not only did he create free creatures, but he did all that was possible to make it easy for them to serve him. He gave them a nature endowed with the highest gifts and qualities. He filled the world with the most manifest signs of his power, goodness, and justice, and to all this he added the supernatural gift of grace. Short of suppressing

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freedom he could do no more. If in spite of all this angels and men sinned, the responsibility cannot be imputed to him.

Yet it may still be urged that he might have done more, or at least better. He might so have arranged things that, at any rate, human sin would have been kept within moderate limits, instead of covering the world like a raging flood. Just as in the present order and arrangement of things there are still many saints, so among the infinite possible orders and arrangements that must have been before God's mind, there must have been one wherein all, or at least nearly all, would have been saints. Since he was free to create what he chose, why did he not create that possible order of things? Why did he reject that and in its place create this actual order so full to overflowing of all evil and wretchedness? The difficulty is serious, and we must confess at once that there is no full and satisfying answer. But that need neither alarm nor disturb us; rather the contrary. For if we men could pierce the deep and infinite mind of God, would he, in all reverence be it said, be a fit object of our adoration? Even in heaven we shall not see all the riches of his being.

Some little, however, can be said to mitigate the gravity of the objection. In the

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first place, the assertion that among the infinite possibilities open to God there must have been one order and arrangement of things in which all or nearly all men would have been saints is wholly gratuitous and indemonstrable. Logically, perhaps, it seems simple. If there be one who sins not, it is logically possible that no one should sin. But the question is not one of logical possibilities. We are speaking of a world of men, of unnumbered multitudes in every variety of position and circumstance. That such a world in which sin would be almost unknown should be not logically but factually possible, without the exertion of such influence as would amount to a suppression of liberty, seems more an imagination than a truth. But even supposing that such an imaginary picture represents the truth, there is still this to consider. God had a definite end in view in creating the world. What that end was we can only know and state, as it has been stated above, in a vague and general way, that it was his own glory, or, in the words of the Vatican Council, for the manifestation of his perfections; but the exact way, and degree or quantity, to speak materially, of this manifestation, we cannot know. Now it is quite conceivable that a multitude of such determinate degrees of this manifestation of

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his perfections, or a variety of definite ends, was present to his choice, all of them good, all perfect. Why he chose one rather than another is beyond the utmost stretch of human understanding. That he chose is the most that we can know. But it is arguable and even probable that to the exact attainment of each end only one particular combination and arrangement of means was perfectly adapted. It is arguable that all human lives and characters and circumstances, and all worldly conditions, are so bound up with each other, and so act and react upon each other, that to change one would be to alter the outcome of the whole. It is arguable that without Judas there would have been no Peter, and without Alexander the Great no Napoleon; consequently that if God wished, as he freely wished, to attain the end he actually chose, he was bound to create the present actual world. To say this is not to limit his omnipotence, any more than it is so if we deny him the power to make a five-sided square. Neither is it to teach fatalism, since man's freedom is in no way influenced. It is, indeed, to take us into the region of God's mysteries, but in such a question this is inevitable, while if the truth of the hypothesis be granted it does at least open to us a way of escape from the awful necessity

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of imputing to God the responsibility of man's sinfulness and of the evil that fills the world.

About other kinds of evil, whether those from which men suffer or those which afflict the animal world, it is not necessary here to say much. Many of them are to be directly attributed to the use or abuse of human freedom; many are the natural result of sin, or the effect of actions contrary to natural laws or human prudence; many, again, are of such a nature that, though they may be bad for the individual, they are yet good for the community; or again, are such that their removal would mean the destruction or nonattainment of a much greater good. In all these cases it is clear, either that God is in no way responsible, or that the so-called evil is not really evil, but good with an accidentally evil aspect. However, to discuss this question fully would take us far beyond the scope of this volume. All we have here tried to do is to show the lines along which Catholic thought works in dealing with the existence of evil, in so far as this affects or is affected by the doctrine of an all-powerful, good, and wise Creator. The fundamental principle governing the whole question is that evil is not a positive entity at all, but a negation, not, indeed, a simple negation, but a negation

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of some good that ought to be present. This principle at once renders impossible the imputation of the causation of evil to God, since necessarily all God's action is positive. The second principle lies in the nature of human freedom, which is necessarily defective and defectible, so that it is impossible for men to exist without sin becoming thereby possible. Consequently the key of the problem lies in the answer to the question, which was the better, the wiser course for God to take, to make sin impossible by refraining from creating free creatures, or to attain the immeasurable good resulting from creating them at the price of some incidental evil. No one but the gloomiest pessimist can hesitate about his answer. It is true that the application of these principles does not remove all obscurities, and that to work them out in all the complexities of the problem brings us face to face with many difficulties; but obscurity and difficulty are inherent in any phase of the contact of man with God, of the finite with the infinite, and can in no hypothesis be avoided. On the other hand, it is equally true that these principles, consecrated by so many centuries of use in the service of Catholic theology, are the only ones that do not lead us into stark contradictions and unreason.

Apart, then, from evil, everything that is

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in the heavens or the earth, or in what may be other worlds or other systems beyond the stretch of human eye or human power to discover or investigate, was at some moment lost in a past beyond human calculation called by God's command into being out of sheer and absolute nothingness. In that instant the world began, and with it time and motion. From that instant this vast created world, under the impulse of the forces and activities with which God had gifted it, began to go forward and to change and develop until it became the world such as we see it and partly know it today. But there is one conception of this world which, common enough even among Christians, we must most carefully avoid. We must not think of the universe as something analogous to a piece of machinery made by man. A clock-maker may make a clock, and having wound it up, leave it to go "by itself" for a week or a month. The world is not like that, differing from the clock only in size and complexity. It was not just "wound up" by God in the beginning and then left to go "by itself" for so many thousands or millions of years until it runs down and comes to a stop or has to be wound up again. God could not make a world like that. As it needed his creative omnipotence to call it out of nothing, so it

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needs, at every moment, his sustaining omnipotence to keep it from sinking back into nothing. God's power and activity are necessarily involved and exerted in every movement of every planet, in every vibration of the ether, in every breath that man draws and every thought he thinks, in every tick of that very clock that we speak of as going "by itself." The forces that move the world are his creation, the laws that govern them are of his making. This is the fundamental fact, let it be noted by the way, that makes miracles both possible and reasonable, since they are simply particular and striking examples of the Creator's power over and loving interest in his own work. This continuous and immanent activity of God in every phase and detail of the world's existence and life is as important and as necessary to bear in mind as creation itself. It is the complement and the correlative of creation. It enables us to realise that "the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof" (Psa. xxiii) as truly now and as completely as when "in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. i 1), and also it enables us to follow without fear all the speculations and to accept without anxiety all the proved or to be proved conclusions of science as to the course taken by the process of world develop-

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ment and the means used to attain the end. There is, however, one all-important field in which the work of creation, in the strictest sense, did not end on any hypothesis as to world processes, when the material universe was called into being and started upon its voyage across the sea of ages. Every human soul, from Adam's down to the baby's of to-day, is, as it comes into being, the direct, immediate result of God's creative act, who at that instant calls it out of eternal nothingness. The human soul, when it begins to be, has no past, no previous existence in a state of potentiality, such as next year's plant has in this year's seed; there is no process of evolution behind it; it is something absolutely new. So that in this way the sum total of created being is still growing, and will go on growing until the number of the elect is filled and all generations of men are called to judgment. The human parents of a child are not the generators of his soul. This, which alone makes man to be man, is the work of God alone. Here is the profound truth underlying the whole of Christian morality, the truth that gives solid reality to the prayer Christ taught us, "Our Father, who art in heaven," the truth that alone makes to be true and gives sweetness and reason to that word of Jesus that otherwise

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would be harsh and unnatural: "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me."¹ Only God could make such a claim, and God may make it only because he is our Creator, our Father, the only real author and immediate cause of our immortal soul.

¹ Matt. x 37.

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